

NATALIE “DAWN” MERTZ

Dawn Mertz has served as the Executive Director of the Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) since June 2015. The HIDTA Program is a grant-funded initiative of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug trafficking regions of the United States.

The Arizona HIDTA’s mission is to increase the safety of Arizona’s citizens by reducing drug trafficking, money laundering, and drug-related crime using an intelligence-driven, threat-focused strategy to target the most significant drug trafficking organizations impacting Arizona. The Arizona HIDTA coordinates and supports the efforts of more than 600 sworn law enforcement officials from 67 agencies.

Prior to her appointment as Executive Director of the Arizona HIDTA, Ms. Mertz spent 27 years as a criminal investigator for the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS CI) Division. In February 2010, she was appointed Special Agent in Charge for the IRS CI Phoenix Field Office, where she was responsible for planning, directing, and evaluating activities of criminal investigation employees in the states of Arizona and New Mexico. During her time as Special Agent in Charge, Ms. Mertz served on the Executive Boards of the Arizona and New Mexico HIDTAs. She retired from the IRS in May 2015.

Ms. Mertz began her career as a Special Agent in Phoenix, working in Arizona for ten years followed by two years in Nevada. As a Special Agent for IRS CI, Ms. Mertz investigated a variety of financial crimes, which included money laundering, structuring, income tax evasion, and tax fraud. The focus of her money laundering cases included narcotics investigations and telemarketing fraud, as well as asset forfeiture.

As a Supervisory Special Agent in Fresno, California, Ms. Mertz supervised a group responsible for financial investigations in the Central Valley of California, including Fresno, Bakersfield, Modesto, and surrounding communities. She then worked at IRS headquarters in Washington D.C., as a Senior Analyst in the Planning and Strategy Section, before returning to Arizona in 2008 as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the IRS CI Phoenix Field Office.

Ms. Mertz attended the University of Wyoming, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance.